

VZCZCXYZ0000  
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHSL #0290/01 1701506  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
O 181506Z JUN 08  
FM AMEMBASSY BRATISLAVA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1796  
INFO RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY 0687  
RUEHPS/AMEMBASSY PRISTINA PRIORITY 0101  
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L BRATISLAVA 000290

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/NCE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/18/2018  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [NATO](#) [KVIR](#) [EU](#) [LO](#)  
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR OBSITNIK'S MEETING WITH FOREIGN  
MINISTER KUBIS

REF: BRATISLAVA 276 BRATISLAVA 266

Classified By: Ambassador Vincent Obsitnik, for reasons 1.4 b and d

11. (C) Summary. In a one-on-one meeting on June 18, Ambassador Obsitnik and Foreign Minister Kubis had a wide-ranging discussion that touched on Kosovo, Afghanistan, Slovak-Hungarian relations, the Lisbon Treaty, energy issues and the Foreign Minister's role and future. Kubis noted GOS support for the UNSYG's "reconfiguration" plan, but said there had been "no change" in Slovakia's stance regarding Kosovo recognition. On Afghanistan, Kubis echoed DefMin Baska's assessment that the GOS would not likely lift caveats until after the 2010 elections. Asked about the current state of Slovak-Hungarian relations, Kubis expressed serious concern about the "Hungarian Guard" and suggested that the response to the Guard's continued existence from both the U.S. and the EU had been inadequate. Regarding Slovak plans for the Transpetrol oil pipeline, Kubis stressed that the GOS priority was to regain a majority stake and management control of the pipeline and that he had no knowledge of any changes to that plan. That said, he could see the possibility of a sale of a minority stake to Russia because it could bring revenue and perhaps Russian commitment to maintain oil flows. Kubis thought that the Polish and Czech positions on the Lisbon Treaty could be decisive, and expressed particular concern that Polish President Kaczynski might "kill" the Treaty. FM Kubis asked for an update on the potential visit to the U.S. by President Gasparovic, stressing that he will be "an important ally" of the U.S., and shared his decision to nominate Slovak UN PermRep Burian to succeed Ambassador Kacer in Washington. Regarding the security of his own position, Kubis appeared relaxed. He acknowledged "heated discussions" within the government on foreign policy issues, but defended his foreign policy approach as balanced and rational. End Summary.

Kosovo -- No Movement

12. (C) Kubis stressed GOS support for UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon's plan to "reconfigure" UNMIK, adding that during a recent meeting with Ban, he had urged him to move ahead with his plans without seeking agreement from any parties. The GOS also supports implementation of the Ahtisaari plan, though Kubis prefers not to refer to it as such. Kubis told the Ambassador that there has been no change in GOS policy on Kosovo. He noted (incorrectly) that only 41 countries have recognized Kosovo. When the number is much higher, according to Kubis -- perhaps over half of UN members -- Slovakia might start the process (of recognition). The Ambassador noted that the likely pro-European composition of the new Serbian

government was more positive than Kubis had predicted. Kubis agreed, but speculated that even if Tadic is able to form a coalition government, he will still be openly negative toward Kosovo.

#### Afghanistan

-----

3, (C) The Ambassador conveyed appreciation for the recent GOS approval (ref a) of higher troop levels for Afghanistan and asked when national caveats could be lifted. Kubis said he did not expect any significant changes with respect to caveats prior to the 2010 elections. In the meantime, he acknowledged the need to expand the government's existing efforts to build public support for the mission and regretted the fact that his schedule allowed little time for domestic speaking engagements.

#### Slovak-Hungarian Relations

-----

14. (C) Relations between Slovaks and Hungarians, and between the Slovak majority and ethnic Hungarian minority, are generally good, Kubis said. Unfortunately, a few politicians, including Jan Slota (whom he characterized as under "major control") created problems. (Comment: Kubis' s characterization of Slota on a short leash was somewhat surprising, given that the MFA had to issue a public apology only a week ago for insulting comments Slota made about Hungarian FM Goncz. It may be coincidental, but we have noted more -- not less -- negative rhetoric from Slota since the European Socialists' decision to readmit Smer to the group.

End comment.) Kubis confirmed what we have heard from other Slovak diplomats, i.e., that Gyurscany's weak domestic position was an impediment to a summit meeting. Kubis claimed Gyurscany would need "something big" in order to make a meeting with PM Fico worthwhile. The Foreign Minister expressed frustration that the Hungarian side continued to place new pre-conditions for a meeting.

15. (C) Kubis expressed genuine concern about the unchecked rise of the "Hungarian Guards." He claimed that neither the U.S., nor the EU had spoken out about the threat. The Slovaks also worry that Hungarian politicians are promoting rhetoric about a "greater Hungary" and autonomy of Hungarian populations in Slovakia, Romania and Serbia. It is not only rhetoric: it is now possible, according to Kubis, for ethnic Hungarian politicians from other countries to gain membership in the Hungarian Parliament. (Comment: it is post's understanding that membership privileges are not available to foreign parliamentarians of ethnic origin.) Kubis described the trends as worrisome, and expressed concern that they would escalate if former Hungarian PM Orban succeeds Gyurscany.

#### Lisbon Treaty

-----

16. (C) FM Kubis predicted that there was unlikely to be any movement soon on Lisbon. The EU is looking to Ireland for recommendations on next steps. With respect to further ratifications, Kubis cited major risks in both Poland and the Czech Republic. Kubis described Polish President Kaczyinski as "calling the shots" on the Treaty, and speculated that he could "kill it." Given Czech President Klaus's outspoken opposition, Kubis thought that PM Topolaneck would need encouragement to proceed. Observing that U.S. interests were served by a united, effective Europe, Kubis suggested that perhaps the U.S. could also weigh in with the Czechs and Poles.

#### Energy Issues

-----

17. (C) FM Kubis said he is looking forward to discussing energy issues with EUR DAS Bryza during his upcoming visit,

and also suggested that it would be useful for DAS Bryza to meet with PM Fico, as well. Ambassador Obsitnik inquired about rumors (first reported in the Russian press) that Slovakia intended to buy back its 49% share of the Transpetrol pipeline and then sell it to the Russians. Kubis responded that the GOS goal remains to regain a majority stake and management control of the pipeline. After that, it might be possible for the Russians to acquire a minority state, according to Kubis, who added that he was not aware of such plans at present. Ambassador highlighted the risk that the Russian supply for the pipeline could run out within 15 years. Kubis countered that a Russian interest might strengthen Russian commitment to keep oil flowing.

#### Visit of President Gasparovic

-----

18. (C) FM Kubis sought an update on the status of the Slovak request for a White House visit by President Gasparovic. Kubis emphasized the importance of such a visit, noting that Gasparovic would most likely win reelection and would be a "important ally" of the U.S. Ambassador Obsitnik responded that the visit is in the process of being scheduled, and if it is, would not likely take place before September. FM Kubis also informed the Ambassador of his nomination of Slovak UN PermRep Peter Burian, a career diplomat with broad U.S. experience, to succeed outgoing Slovak Ambassador Rasto Kacer. Pending President Gasparovic's approval, the GOS will request agreement.

#### Whither Kubis?

-----

19. (C) Ambassador Obsitnik alluded to recent reported tensions between FM Kubis and PM Fico (ref b). Kubis responded by stated emphatically that he was not a party member and did not take the job just to be a "messenger." He acknowledged that there are often "heated conversations" within the government on foreign policy issues, e.g., Afghanistan and missile defense, but added that he believed that he had been able to maintain a balanced and rational

approach. The Prime Minister would continue to express his personal views, of course. Kubis indicated that he would move on "at some point," depending on the opportunity. Kubis encouraged the Ambassador to engage PM Fico in a larger discussion regarding bilateral relations and Fico's attitudes about the U.S. Ambassador noted that a meeting request had been pending for several weeks. Comment: Kubis appeared relaxed and confident in the meeting, betraying none of the pressure that our contacts say he is feeling due to frayed relations with the Prime Minister and criticism from the PM's party. Although we believe that Kubis is not as sanguine as his demeanor may have suggested, we also don't see any signs of imminent change in MFA leadership -- if for no other reason than the paucity of acceptable replacements.

OBSITNIK